A PROPOSAL FOR THE NEW EDUCATION ACT

YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE
A NEW PLAN FOR EDUCATION

Yukon
Education

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Preamble

In September 1986, the Government of the Yukon embarked on an ambitious journey toward comprehensive education reform in the territory. Many elements of that reform are reflected in the companion paper, *Partners in Education: An Action Plan.*

The greatest expression of this government's commitment to education reform is the extensive review of the *School Act*. By way of this position paper, we are giving Yukon people a look at necessary changes to the public schools legislation. These changes are consistent with the clearly expressed concerns and interests of the Yukon public

The Education Act Task Force was established in 1987 to seek public views on the state of education in the territory, and to learn where Yukon people feel changes should be made to the present legislation. The Task Force reported to government in September, 1987. The report was a clear expression of Yukoners' thoughts and concerns. It is our belief that this paper, *A Proposal for the New Education Act* reflects the interests of Yukon people.

It is the government's intent to move into new directions in education by building on and adding to the strengths of the existing system. As an expression of this intent, the name of the new legislation will be changed. The title, "Education Act", appropriately reflects the government's concept of education as an integral part of society, reaching well beyond the schoolroom.

The government would like to receive your comments on this position paper, and the companion document, *Partners in Education: An Action Plan* so that we can enter the next phase of our work, the development of the legislation itself, an Education Act for the Yukon.

Introduction

The present *School Act* originally came into effect in 1962. Amendments were made to the act in 1974, but much has changed in our society during the intervening years.

The provisions of the new Education Act will reflect many of the values and priorities of the people of the Yukon and will set the direction for the future of education in the territory. As noted in the companion document, *Partners in Education: An Action Plan* the Yukon education system is striving to provide a high quality education to Yukon students, one which meets the individual needs of all students. Individuals are assisted in reaching their potential so that they may become productive, responsible and self-reliant members of Yukon and Canadian society. The important relationship between the school and the community is also emphasized, a relationship through which all partners in education — parents, students, teachers, the community and government — work together to achieve a high calibre of instruction and a positive learning environment.

In short, the government supports two central themes: universal quality education to meet individual needs, and greater public participation in the education system.

The principles on which the new legislative provisions are based are consistent with these two themes. These principles are:

- equality of opportunity to achieve
- equality of access to an appropriate education
- flexibility and democratic, decentralized control
- responsiveness to the needs of individual students
- responsibility, and accountability of all partners in the education partnership

This document is intended to inform Yukon people of the directions the government is committed to taking in the Education Act. It is important to note that the minute details of individual clauses of the act are not addressed here. This document focuses on the broad scope of the legislation.

The specific legislative initiatives have been grouped under general headings which correspond to the government's overall educational themes outlined in

Partners in Education: An Action Plan. It is important that the legislative reforms be looked at in the context of themes and statements of objectives so that the reasons for the new legislative directions can be understood.

Major Legislative Directions

There are twenty-three major elements that the government is considering incorporating in the Education Act. They have been divided into two sections which correspond to the two central themes of the education reform: **universal quality education** and **greater public participation.** A brief description of each of these elements is provided in the following pages.

Universal Quality Education

The Right of Access to an Appropriate Education

This objective supports the government desire to ensure the right to education as noted in the companion document, *Partners in Education: An Action Plan.*

Currently, the *School Act* does not specifically grant individuals the right to an education. The Education Act will state that every school-age child in the Yukon is entitled to have access to a public education program which is appropriate to that child.

There will be obligations on the part of government or, when established, on future school boards, to balance this right of individuals with the limited educational resources available. While keeping in mind the primary goal of providing the best education possible to the student, the government or school boards will have to consider a number of factors which may influence their decisions. Societal standards, the relevant financial circumstances of the government or school board, access to facilities for the provision of education programs, and the availability of qualified persons to provide services have to be considered. All of these factors will be taken into account in meeting the child's right to a public education.

Curriculum

The government's objective to provide basic standards of education is supported through this legislative component.

The act will contain a statement that the Minister of Education shall provide a uniform core curriculum for all public schools. This will ensure that the practical value of a Yukon education is maintained. Yukon students will be able to receive recognition for their school work and transfer smoothly to other public schools in the Yukon and throughout Canada, and expand their education into the college or university level.

Through setting recognized basic standards, a core curriculum will also provide Yukon students with a greater opportunity to secure employment and to pursue the course of employment of their choosing.

At the same time, to meet the multi-cultural educational objective of this government, the local units developed for use with the core curriculum will reflect the Yukon's distinct cultural perspectives.

Native Language Instruction

Due to the importance of native languages to the culture of the Indian people of the Yukon, the act will reflect a basic right of Indian people. They will be entitled to classes in which they are taught how to speak, read and write their traditional languages.

This meets a number of the government objectives for education. It contributes to a positive education environment which is supportive of Indian heritage. At the same time, equality is brought about through the recognition and promotion of traditional languages, a fundamental component of Indian culture.

French Language Instruction

The government has taken a major role in providing French instruction in Yukon schools. In mind of the commitment this reflects, the Education Act will not explicitly state the language of instruction for Yukon schools as is presently the case in the *School Act.* Section 115 of the *School Act* requires that English is to be the language of instruction in all Yukon schools. This can be viewed as in contravention of the Canadian Charter of

Rights and Freedoms. The Charter guarantees French first language instruction in either predominantly English speaking schools or, if sufficient numbers warrant, instruction in a totally French speaking school.

Once again, the objective of rights in education is being upheld. In this case, Canada's Francophone heritage is being recognized.

A Teaching Profession Act

In consultation with the Yukon Teachers' Association, the government will be developing a Teaching Profession Act. It is expected that the tabling of this companion legislation in the Legislature will coincide with the tabling of the Education Act in the spring of 1989.

By supporting the teaching profession in the territory, and giving them the mechanism to set high professional standards, this vital group in the education partnership will be given the opportunity to grow and develop.

Compulsory Attendance

To ensure a child's right to receive a basic education, the Education Act will restate that a student must receive instruction from the age of 6 until the end of the school year in which he or she attains the age of 16.

Provisions for kindergarten will remain in the act.

Where it is anticipated a student may benefit from special programming or different surroundings, the superintendent, in consultation with the parents, may place the student in an alternative program of studies or different classroom setting.

Absence for Cultural or Spiritual Ceremonies

Recognition of the cultural values in Yukon society is an important part of our education system. To prepare students for full participation in a Yukon, Canadian and world society, cultural differences must be recognized.

The act will establish attendance at cultural and spritual ceremonies, within reasonable limitations, as an acceptable reason for a short-term student absence from school.

Truancy

Truancy is a problem that must be dealt with effectively at the earliest instance. The cause of a child's failure to attend school regularly must be determined, so that steps can then be taken to ensure that the child's right to an education can be fulfilled.

Every effort will be made to correct the underlying problem experienced by the child which leads to a record of absences from school.

The government will take all steps necessary to find an appropriate education program to foster the student's interest in school. If counselling of the student or parent is thought to be part of a solution, this service will be made available.

There will be no provisions for fines under the Education Act. The government contends that through responsible efforts by parents supported by the resources the school system can offer, remedies can be found for truancy cases.

Student truancy will also be eliminated as a reason for which a student can be dismissed from school. Dismissal is no solution to this problem.

If after all avenues are exhausted a student is still not regularly attending school or responding to the school programs offered, the superintendent, upon the recommendation of the parents can allow the student to leave school. This will only apply in those cases where the student has reached the age of 14.

Discipline of Students

The Education Act will not allow corporal punishment to be used on students under any circumstances.

Inappropriate behaviour by a student will be dealt with in a manner determined by the school committee. Some general guidelines will be established through regulation which will give school committees a general framework within which they can determine appropriate policies. For instance, the regulations will not permit corporal punishment, nor will they allow for extended suspensions.

Long-term suspensions to the end of a semester or school year will not be given sanction under the new act. The government is committed to finding alternatives to the use of suspensions to deal with what amount to special needs problems.

Specialized education programs will provide an option to those students who are considered too disruptive to remain in a normal classroom environment. Programming designed to address the behavioural problems and

meet the student's educational needs will be offered. This alternative will be used in those cases where dismissal has been the traditional approach to dealing with discipline problems.

As dismissal from school is the most severe form of discipline to which a student can be subjected, dismissal will only be permitted where a student:

* persistently disobeys school rules
* willfully disobeys a principal or a teacher
* behaves in a manner that has a serious harmful effect on the character or person of other pupils or school staff

Greater Public Participation

Education Alternatives

The Education Act will recognize every parent's right and responsibility to choose the education most appropriate for their child. The parent may choose to have the child taught in a public school, in a private school, or at home. It will be the parent's responsibility to meet the costs of home and private school instruction. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that the public education system meets individual student needs.

Given that the child has the right to an education, it will be necessary for the government to ensure that this right is being upheld. Therefore, a number of reasonable conditions will apply to the parents' choice of instruction for the child: all parents who choose to educate their children outside of the public school system will be obliged to register their children with the Department of Education; and, all non-public school instruction of students will be assessed by the Department of Education in order to ensure that all children of school age are receiving an appropriate education.

A positive and valued relationship has developed over many years between the Catholic Diocese and the government respecting the public education of Catholic children. In support of the important role they play, the Catholic schools in the Yukon will retain the same relationship to government as is now the case under the *School Act*.

Special Needs Education

In keeping with the objective to provide opportunities for children to reach their maximum potential, the act will state that all Yukon children, including those individuals with special needs, have a right to an education that is appropriate to the individual learner. Parents will have the right at all times to be involved in the decision-making regarding special needs programming and placement of their child.

ength and Flexibility of the School Year

The Education Act will reflect the government's interest in devolving responsibilities to the community level as part of its commitment to encourage democratic participation in the education system. The start and end date for the school year will be determined by the school committee or committees of a community. These dates would apply to all schools in a particular community.

There are some restrictions to the freedom of school committees to choose the start and end dates. These restrictions include such matters as Grade 12 examinations, and the ability of teachers to undertake professional development during summer months.

The length of the school year will remain at 190 days or the equivalent (see *Length of the School Day* for more detail).

Discretionary Days

It is the government's intent to provide the school committees with an additional discretionary (or "non-instructional") day to apply as they see appropriate during the school year. This means that there will now be 4 discretionary days.

Length of the School Day

The length of the school day will remain at a minimum of 5 hours per day, or, at the discretion of the school committee, 4.5 hours a day for grade 1. However, each community, through its school committee or committees, will be empowered to extend the school day to 5.5 hours.

This additional half hour per day can be used two ways. A school committee may decide to use that time for additional instruction to meet the educational interests of an individual school or community. On the other hand it

may wish to set the day at 5.5 hours to meet the requirements of a 190 day school year in less time (if the full half hour a day is devoted to reducing the length of the school year, this would result in a year which is 173 days in length — this is what is referred to as "190 days or the equivalent" in the preceding section).

School Committee Composition

It is this government's view that school committees are the legitimate authority through which the community's interests can be reflected in school operations. There will be a minimum of five elected members on each school committee. School committee electoral districts based on individual school catchment areas will be defined. Eligible Yukon residents will be able to vote in the district where they live.

To ensure that these committees fully represent the interests of all Yukon people, the government is committed to the provision of guaranteed seats to the Yukon's Indian people in proportion to their numbers in the community. The number of seats will be determined through discussions with the individual bands and in consultation with other community educational interests such as the school committees.

Discussions with the Indian bands will also consider a "sunset" on guaranteed representation on school committees. In other words, consideration will be given to determining the length of time the guarantees will be necessary.

School Committee Responsibilities

Over and above the present responsibilities of a school committee, the act will add significant new powers to their mandate. School committees will be given more local authority over matters such as the allocation of the school's operating budget, public use of the school building after school hours, and local modifications to the curriculum. The school committees will also have more input into selecting the principal and teachers who are hired for the school. The specific powers of school committees will be to:

- determine the allocation of the school's operation and maintenance budget
- select, in consultation with the regional superintendent, the school principal from the list of eligible candidates
- provide direction to the regional superintendent as to the type of teachers required by the school (i.e. preferred subject areas) and the preferred personal qualities of any teacher candidate
- determine school renovations within the budget allocation
- determine school rules and the school discipline policy
- determine the use of four non-instructional days
- approve the allocation of instructional days for extra-curricular or curricular fieldtrips of more than one day's duration
- determine the hours between which students must attend school
- determine the starting and ending dates of the school year in their community
- determine the extracurricular use of the school building
- negotiate school joint use agreements
- provide recommendations to the regional superintendent as to priority educational budget items for their school
- approve any changes or additions to the local content of the curriculum.

Establishment of School Boards

The act will keep the option open for communities to take on greater powers in educational affairs by allowing them to petition government for the establishment of school boards. The legislation will require that petitioners provide adequate data on such matters as a sufficient population and a credible tax base as part of a request to hold a community referendum on the establishment of a school board.

School districts governed by a school board may be established in a municipality or in an area outside a municipality which has a sufficient population base. A school board will have responsibilities such as: ensuring that a school is conducted in accordance with the act;

hiring and employing teachers and support staff; making regulations for the management of a school; ensuring compliance with the compulsory attendance provisions of the act or regulations; and settling disputes between a school and parents or students.

The Education Council

a. Composition

The Education Council will be formally recognized in the new act. Members of this council have provided a valuable service to the government over a number of years through recommending general policy directions in education.

The council will be given additional secretariat and research support to that presently provided.

A newly structured method of election will ensure that all educational interests in the Yukon are represented on the council. The process of elections will allow for appropriate representation of linguistic, regional and cultural interests.

b. Mandate

The Council will play a stronger policy advisory role to the Minister. It will be expected to fully represent territorial public school interests when recommending future priorities in educational spending and when advising on such matters as general directions in policy and curriculum development.

Indian Commission on Education

Yukon Indian people have indicated to the Yukon Government through the Kwiya report that they see the need for a distinct central authority to look after the coordination of education matters specific to their culture, languages and values.

The government is committed to recognizing equality among Yukon people and promoting understanding of the unique history and values of the Yukon Indian. To be consistent with this objective, if Yukon Indian people put in place an Indian Commission on Education, the government will recognize and support this Commission through the Education Act.

Indian Education Authorities

It is possible that some Indian bands in the Yukon will wish to establish a committee structure to oversee Indian cultural and language education at the community level. The government is prepared to recognize this new committee structure in the Education Act.

Furthermore, the act will confirm the representation of the Indian band or, where appropriate, of the Indian Education Authority on the interviewing team for the hiring of local principals. This is a current practice of the government, one which has had positive results.

The Rights of Parents

The Education Act will list the rights of parents. This provision will clearly demonstrate to parents the rights which they have in the educational partnership:

- the right to view their child's school records
- the right to view a child in his or her classroom situation where reasonable notice is given to the principal
- the right to give or refuse consent to a child's placement in a special program
- the right to receive regular and timely reports on a child's performance in school
- the right to choose how a child will be educated and the forum in which he or she will be taught, whether that is in the public school system, in a private school, or at home. Programs must be chosen consistent with the right of all students to receive an appropriate education.

Access to Student Records

The Education Act will ensure that the parent of a student and/or a student who is 16 years of age or older has the opportunity to review that student's records. As well, if a student's records contain a test or an evaluation of the student, the test or evaluation is to be reviewed with support available from a person who is competent in explaining the test or evaluation.

Religious Instruction and Patriotic Exercises

The act shall provide that where a majority of students who attend a school are of the same religious faith, a school committee may direct a principal to organize and schedule a program of religious instruction for these students.

School committees will also retain the power to determine whether or not patriotic exercises will take place.

Specific Administrative Directions

There are a number of areas where the government plans on making administrative changes which will have an effect on the Education Act. Specific details on these are provided in the following section.

Correspondence Courses

The Education Act will state that correspondence courses will be available as a publicly funded alternative to public school education in those circumstances where a student is unable to attend school due to a long term disability, or due to the student living an extreme distance from a public school. Correspondence courses are also acceptable alternatives for students wishing to take courses which are not available at the public school they attend.

It is important to note that there has been very limited student success in the Yukon with correspondence courses. These courses will continue to be accepted, but are not preferred. New technologies such as video and distance education support may enhance the value of these courses in the future.

School Committee Election Procedures

The Education Act will provide for increased supervision of school committee elections by qualified individuals. In order to ensure confidence in school committees, and the Education Council, it is essential that all elections are run according to correct procedure. Specific areas that will be revised are:

- the appointment and qualifications of returning officers
- the manner of voting (eg. standard election forms; numbered ballots)
- procedure for nomination of a candidate
- qualifications of electors and candidates
- the calculating and reporting of election results

The Role of the Superintendent of Education

The Education Act will require the Superintendent of Education to be a professional educator. The superintendent will be required to report twice a year to the Education Council on the operation of the Yukon's schools.

As noted earlier, the act will give the superintendent the power to allow a student, upon consent from his or her parents, to leave school once that student has reached the age of 14. This will only be granted in extreme cases where all other avenues to provide the student with an education have failed.

The act will reinforce the powers which the superintendent presently has to ensure that the entire system runs well. These powers include the hiring of professional and support staff, involvement with the Public Service Commission in negotiating the collective agreement with the Yukon Teachers' Association, the designation of school attendance areas, and fiscal responsibility for the Public Schools Branch of the Department of Education.

The Role of the Regional Superintendents

The regional superintendents will be required to report twice a year to the superintendent on the operation of the schools within their respective districts. The Education Act will allow regional superintendents to delegate the role of teacher evaluations to principals and to vice-principals in larger schools. Difficult evaluations would be done by a regional superintendent at the request of a principal, and evaluations of teachers with very special skills would be done by teaching professionals with superior qualifications in those particular fields.

As well, regional superintendents will be required to evaluate a principal annually. Part of the evaluation will include consultation with the school committee. The committee's views will be reflected in the evaluation.

The regional superintendent is required to attend a minimum of two school committee meetings per year, and

shall also be required to meet with a school committee upon request, with reasonable notice. The regional superintendent will be required to consult with a school committee and the school principal prior to assigning a new teacher to the school.

The Role of the Principal

Under the Education Act, the principal shall be empowered to supervise all persons who work on the school premises. Principals will be required to attend all school committee meetings upon reasonable notice from the school committee. Principals will also be required to report to the regional superintendent any dangerous condition that exists on school property. Presently, principals are only required to report any contagious or infectious disease or unsanitary condition found in the school.

The Role of the Vice-Principal

The Education Act shall establish flexible general supervisory and management guidelines for the role of the vice-principal. The vice-principal will be authorized to evaluate teachers when this duty is delegated by the principal.

The Role of the Teacher

As an addition to their spectrum of regular duties and responsibilities, teachers will be required to admit to their classrooms, for the purpose of observing instruction, the parent of a child enrolled in the class once prior arrangements have been made with the principal.

Probationary Period for Teachers

Temporary teachers who are offered permanent appointments shall have their temporary experience credited against the required two years of probation if their performance evaluations while being a temporary teacher were satisfactory.

Qualification Updating

It is proposed that the new act will require that, as a condition of continued employment, all teachers shall have five years from the date the new act comes into force to accrue a certain number of update courses such as cross-cultural training or Native language courses. These courses will be sponsored by the Department of Education.

Teacher Lay-Offs

The Education Act will include a statement of the manner in which teachers can be laid off. Presently, the *School Act* simply states that teachers can be laid off where there is a decrease in student enrolment; where a school or instructional department is closed; or where an instructional program is discontinued.

The new act will state that, when necessary, teachers will be laid off on the basis of the least seniority with the Department of Education or a school board. It is important to note however that the maintenance of the basic core curriculum in all schools will also be a factor weighing heavily in lay-off decisions.

Suspension of a Teacher

The Education Act will state that a teacher who has been suspended from teaching shall be paid his or her salary until that teacher's contract of employment is terminated in accordance with the act.

Resignation of a Teacher

The Education Act will call for teachers to provide the Department of Education with notice of resignation by April 30th as opposed to the 30 days notice prior to the end of the school year which is required at present. This increased period of notice will allow the department more time to seek and find a qualified individual to fill a vacant position.

Involvement in Political Office

The Education Act will enable a teacher to take a leave of absence without pay to be a candidate in either a territorial or federal election. A teacher who is a candidate will be required to take a leave of absence upon filing of nomination papers. Upon being elected, a teacher will be granted leave of absence without pay for the term of the political office.

Evaluation of Teachers

The Education Act will require that teachers be evaluated at least once every three years. Before an evaluation of a teacher can be completed the regional superintendent or delegate will be required to view the teacher in a teaching situation on at least three separate occasions.

School committees will continue to have responsibility for requesting an evaluation of a teacher where professional problems have come to their attention.

Retirement

The Education Act will not oblige teachers to retire at the age of 65. As a result of the provisions of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, age-based discrimination, unless it falls within the reasonable limits provision of the Charter, must be eliminated from legislation.

Conclusion

Legislation can't solve all problems. The Education Act will be a contract between all partners in education — students, parents, teachers, the community and government — a contract that provides those groups with a clear definition of each other's role. It will also promote an environment in which all Yukon people are given the opportunity to succeed, both in a positive and rewarding education system, and in the world around us.

We live in an society characterized by continual change. Education plays an important role in preparing people to become active and responsible citizens in that society. Yukon people are encouraged to actively contribute to the development of an education system which meets individual needs, and which benefits us all individually and collectively. Through a partnership in which the people in Yukon communities work closely with teachers and government, a responsive and dynamic system of public education can be further developed.

Partners in education have an important responsibility to ensure that the ultimate goal of education is met — the development of a solid foundation in all individuals so that each person can live and work in a satisfying and responsible way.

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE YUKON'S PROPOSED NEW EDUCATION ACT

Why does the Yukon need a new Education Act?

The old School Act came into effect over 25 years ago, and was considered to be a progressive act at the time it was written. The system worked well under the old Act, but the new Education Act will better meet the needs of today. During the last quarter century there have been many changes in Canadian and Yukon society. For instance, Canada's new Constitution guarantees certain language and equality rights. The new Education Act will be written to reflect the rights and values of the Yukon's multi-cultural heritage.

The Education Act position papers emphasize the "Partners in Education" theme. What does that mean to me, as a parent? How can I take part in my child's education?

By providing a supportive home for your child, you greatly encourage your child's success at school. You can talk to your child's teachers and principal, take your concerns and ideas to your school committee, or run for election to the committee yourself. The Education Act will give school committees more say in local decisions. The Act lists your rights as a parent...the rights that will allow you to be fully involved in the kind of education your child is receiving.

How will the new Education Act provide for children whose needs can't be fully met in regular classroom programs?

The Education Act will ensure that every school-age child will have access to a public education which is right for that child. To help reach that goal, a Special Education Policy has been developed, and a coordinator of special education is on staff. Yukon people have said they want to see that each child, according to his or her abilities, and the resources available, receives the best education possible.

Why are Indian people to be guaranteed a certain number of seats on school committees?

The people of the Yukon, through public consultation, have said they want more say in education matters. School committees will have increased powers under the new Act. The committees will help decide how the school budgets are spent. Committees will give approval for changes and additions to the local content of school courses. Each committee will have no less than five elected members.

Because school committees will be doing more, it is important that decisions on school issues are arrived at through significant input from both the Native and non-Native communities. To encourage more involvement by Indian people, they will be guaranteed seats on school committees. The number of seats will be determined through discussions with the individual bands and in consultation with other community educational interests such as school committees. These discussions will include determining the length of time the guarantees will be necessary.

Will my child's right to French language instruction be ensured in the Education Act?

Your child's right to French language instruction is already provided for in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The government is firmly committed to providing French first language programming as is evident through the establishment of L'Ecole Emilie Tremblay as a French school in its own right.

The new Canada/Yukon Agreement on French and Native Languages provides more funding for language services. The government will be hiring a coordinator to look at further ways to meet French and Native language needs.

What provision will the Education Act make for student discipline?

Working within the department's general guidelines, school committees will set their discipline policies.

The new Act will not allow physical punishment or extended suspensions from school under any circumstances. If a child's behaviour is too disruptive for a regular classroom, special education programs designed to help with behaviour problems will be provided as an option.

Will the length of the school day and school year change under the new Education Act?

The school year will remain at 190 days, 5 hours per day, or 4.5 hours per day for Grade One at the discretion of the school committee. However, each community, through its school committee, has the option of extending the school day from 5 to 5.5 hours. This will mean the equivalent of 190 days can be completed in 173 days. There are a few factors which will have to be considered by school committees when setting the school year. These include the timing of Grade 12 exams and teachers' professional development.

I understand that the new Act will contain some changes for teachers who wish to seek political office.

Yes, it does. A teacher must still obtain leave of absence without pay to be a candidate in a federal or territorial election. However, if elected, a teacher no longer has to resign. The teacher has the option of taking a leave of absence without pay for the term of the political office.

Will the rights and responsibilities of teachers be included as part of the Education Act?

The Act will include a section on teachers' responsibilities to their students, and on matters such as teachers' probationary periods, qualification updating and resignations.

A Teaching Profession Act will be developed to establish teachers' professional rights and responsibilities, and to make provision for teachers to function as a self-regulating body. Teachers themselves will help to ensure high standards are maintained within the profession.

Does my child's right to an education under the new Act include a choice of either public, private, or home schooling?

As a parent, you have the right to choose the type of education that's right for your child - public or private school, or at home. At the same time, your child has a right to a quality education equal to that of other students. To protect that right, the government will set reasonable conditions and standards that must be met for children educated outside the public school system.

Will there be any change to the role of Catholic schools in the new Act?

Throughout many years, the Catholic Diocese and the government have developed a positive and valued relationship. They worked well together under the old School Act to provide a public education for Catholic children. The same supportive relationship will continue under the new Education Act.

Will the Act provide for religious instruction and patriotic exercises in public schools?

The Act provides for religious instruction where the majority of students in a school are of the same faith. The school committee may direct a principal to organize and schedule a program of religious instruction for those students. School committees may also decide whether patriotic exercises will be held and in what form.